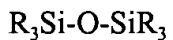


wherein [characterized by the feature that, as] the silylating agent in step c) [, one uses] comprises a disiloxane of formula I



wherein [whereby] the residues R, independently of one another, identically or differently, signify in each case a hydrogen atom or a nonreactive, organic, linear, branched, cyclic, saturated or unsaturated, aromatic or heteroaromatic residue.

Claim 2. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with Claim 1 wherein [, characterized by the feature that, in] step a)[, one introduces] comprises introducing a silicate-type lyogel into the reactor.

Claim 3. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with Claim 2 wherein [, characterized by the feature that, in] step a) [, one introduces] comprises introducing into the reactor a silicate-type lyogel which is obtainable by hydrolysis and condensation of Si alkyloxides in an organic solvent with water.

Claim 4. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with Claim 2 wherein [, characterized by the feature that, in] step a) [, one introduces] comprises introducing into the reactor a silicate-type hydrogel [that is] prepared by bringing an aqueous water glass solution to a pH value ≤ 3 with the aid of an acidic ion-exchanged resin or an inorganic acid to produce silicic acid and, via the addition of a base, polycondensing the silicic acid[, which is produced in this way] to give a SiO_2 gel [and, if an inorganic acid has been used, washing the gel essentially free from electrolytes with water].

Claim 5. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with Claim 2, wherein [characterized by the feature that one introduces into the reactor] in step a) a silicate-type gel is introduced into the reactor, the silicate-type gel being [which is] prepared [by obtaining it] from an aqueous water glass solution with the aid of at least one organic [and/] or inorganic acid via the intermediate stage of silicic acid sol.

Claim 6. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with one of Claims 1 through 5, characterized by [the feature that, prior to and/or during the preparation of the gel, one adds] addition of IR turbidity-promoting agents.

Claim 7. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with one of Claims 1 through [6] 5, characterized by [the feature that] addition of fibers [are added prior to and/or during, the preparation of the gel].

Claim 8. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that one allows] claim 1 wherein the lyogel obtained in step a) [to age] is aged before it is washed in step b).

Claim 9. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that one washes the gel] claim 1 wherein the lyogel in step b) is washed [for a sufficiently long time] until the water content of the lyogel [gel] is ≤ 5 wt.%.

Claim 10. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein the organic solvent in step b) comprises [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that use is made of aliphatic alcohols, ethers, esters, or ketones and] aliphatic or aromatic hydrocarbon[s as the organic solvents in step b)].

Claim 11. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that use is made of a symmetrical disiloxane as] the silylating agent in step c) comprises symmetrical disiloxane.

Claim 12. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that, as the silylating agent in step c), a disiloxane is used in which] all the residues R in the disiloxane are identical.

Sub A
~~Claim 13. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that hexamethyldisiloxane is used as] the silylating agent in step c) is hexamethyldisiloxane.~~

Sub C
~~Claim 14. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that the silylation process] the surface-silylating agent in step c) is carried out in a solvent.~~

Sub C
~~Claim 15. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that the silylation process] the surface-silylating agent in step c) is carried out in the presence of a catalyst[, preferably an acid].~~

Sub C
~~Claim 16. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that the silylation process] the surface-silylating agent in step c) is carried out in the presence of catalytic quantities of trimethylchlorosilane.~~

Sub C
~~Claim 17. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that], prior to step d), [one washes] the surface-silylated [gel] lyogel is washed with a protic or aprotic solvent.~~

Sub C
~~Claim 18. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that one] step d) comprises subcritically [dries] drying the surface-silylated [gel] lyogel.~~

Sub C
~~Claim 19. (Amended) A process [Process] in accordance with claim 1 wherein [at least one of the preceding claims, characterized by the feature that], prior to [silylation, one reacts the gel obtained in step b)] step c), the lyogel is washed with a solution of an orthosilicate[, which is] capable of bringing about condensation, of formula $R^1_4-Si(OR^2)_n$ [, preferably, an alkyl orthosilicate and/or an aryl orthosilicate, whereby] wherein n = 2 through 4 and R¹ and R², independently of one another, are~~

hydrogen atoms, linear or branched C₁-C₄ alkyl residues, cyclohexyl residues or phenyl residues[, or with an aqueous silicic acid solution].12

Please add the following new claims.

-- Claim 20. (NEW) A process in accordance with claim 4 wherein an inorganic acid is used to bring the aqueous water glass solution to a pH value ≤ 3 , and the lyogel is washed essentially free from electrolytes with water.

Claim 21. (NEW) A process in accordance with claim 10 wherein the organic solvent in step b) is selected from aliphatic alcohols, ethers, esters and ketones.

Claim 22. (NEW) A process in accordance with claim 15 wherein the catalyst comprises an acid.

Claim 23. (NEW) A process in accordance with claim 19 wherein the orthosilicate is selected from alkyl orthosilicate and aryl orthosilicate.

Claim 24. (NEW) A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein, prior to step c), the lyogel is washed with aqueous silicic acid solution.--

REMARKS

Claims 1 - 19 are pending in the application, each of which is amended above. New claims 20 - 24 are added by the foregoing amendments. Applicant requests that the amendments be entered in the application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicant requests reconsideration of the rejection of the claims and reexamination of the application.

Claim Objections. Claims 7 - 19 are objected to under 27 C.F.R. 1.75 as being in improper form, specifically, being in multiple dependent from depending from another multiple dependent claim.